

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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COME-00 DODE-00 EB-03 FPC-01 H-01 INR-10 INT-01 L-02

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SP-02 SS-14 STR-01 TRSE-00 FRB-01 FEA-01 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0188

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AMCONSUL KARACHI

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TAGS: ENRG, EAGR, EIND, PK

SUBJECT: GLOOMY WATER AND ELECTRICITY SHORTAGES THREATEN
AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN

1. AFTER HEARING SOME PESSIMISTIC COMMENTS ABOUT THE ELECTRIC POWER AND IRRIGATION WATER SITUATION IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN FROM UNDP ADVISOR TO PUNJAB PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD JIRI PRAZAK AT SOCIAL EVENT OCT 6, I INVITED HIM TO CALL AT CONGEN TO FILL US IN OCT 8. PRAZAK DESCRIBED TO ME AND GRIFFIN SITUATION OF IMMINENT PROBLEMS WHICH HE TERMED "MISERABLE." PRAZAK ASSERTED THAT MAIN NORTHERN GRID SYSTEM, SERVING PUNJAB AND NWFP, IS EXPECTED TO OPERATE AT 200-400 MW BELOW CAPACITY DURING UPCOMING WINTER SEASON. HE OUTLINED CURRENT INSTALLED ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION CAPACITY IN NORTHERN GRID AS ABOUT 1,560 MW (868 HYDEL AND 692 THERMAL); THUS SHORTFALL WOULD CONSTITUTE 12.5 TO 25 PERCENT OF CAPACITY.

2. PRAZAK ASCRIBED SHORTAGE OF ELECTRIC POWER AVAILABILITY
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PRIMARILY TO POOR MONSOON RAINS WHICH HAVE FAILED TO FILL

MANGLA DAM RESERVOIR. PRAZAK SAID NORMAL FULL WINTER POND LEVEL AT MANGLA WAS 1202 FEET (ABOVE MEAN SEA LEAVEL); WATER LEVEL NOW STANDS AT ONLY 1164 FEET AND IS DROPPING .7 TO .9 FEET PER DAY. LOWEST LEVEL AT WHICH POND COULD FEED POWER TURBINES, HE SAID, WAS 1040 FEET, AND LEVEL OF POND WOULD DROP MORE RAPIDLY TOWARD BOTTOM AS POND AREA DECREASED. MOREOVER, POWER GENERATION ALSO VARIES WITH KINETIC FORCE OF FALLING WATER, WHICH IS LESS AT LOWER POND LEVELS.

3. PRAZAK SAID IMPORTANT, BUT SECONDARY, REASON FOR ANTICIPATING POWER SHORTAGE WAS UTAGE OF POWER GENERATION EQUIPMENT IN NUMBER OF LOCATIONS IN NORTHERN GRID. TOTAL OUTAGES BECAUSE OF MAINTENANCE OR REPAIRS AMOUNT TO 359 MW AT PRESENT. MOST OUTAGES HAVE OCCURRED AT THERMAL POWER STATIONS, EXCEPT FOR TWO 40 MW TURBINES AT WARSAK DAM WHICH ARE OFF-LINE FOR REPAIRS. (WHEN LATTER ARE READY REMAINING TWO WILL GO DOWN FOR MAINTENANCE.)

4. PRAZAK CALCULATED THAT OVERALL EFFECT OF THIS SITUATION WAS THAT NORTHERN GRID SYSTEM WOULD LACK UP TO 400 MW IN POWER CAPACITY THROUGHOUT WINTER. THIS WOULD LEAD TO "LOAD-SHEDDING" (I.E., POWER CUT-OFFS) BEGINNING ANY TIME AFTER OCT 15. HE EXPECTED INTERMITTENT SHUT-DOWNS OF INDUSTRIES THROUGHOUT WINTER AS WELL AS SERIOUS EFFECTS UPON AGRICULTURE. LATTER DEPENDS HEAVILY UPON CANAL IRRIGATION WATER DIRECTLY FROM DAMS, AS WELL AS UPON TUBEWELL WATER, WHICH CAN ONLY BE LIFTED BY PUMPS DEPENDENT UPON ELECTRICITY GENERATED FROM SAME DAMS. OUTLOOK THEREFORE IS FOR POORER THAN NORMAL WHEAT CROPS AND REDUCED INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION, IN ADDITION TO SOME INCONVENIENCE TO PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS AND GENERAL PUBLIC USE.

5. PRAZAK'S GLOOMY STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN GENERALLY CONFIRMED BY KNOWLEDGEABLE OFFICIALS WE HAVE CONTACTED IN PAST 48 HOURS -- EXCEPT FOR SENIOR WAPDA OFFICIAL, WHO ATTEMPTED TO REASSURE US THAT THERMAL POWER GENERATION WULD ADEQUATELY COMPENSATE FOR LACK OF HYDEL GENERATION. THIS WAS DESPITE FACT THAT THERMAL POWER COSTS WOULD BE EXTREMELY HIGH, SINCE FUEL TO BE USED IS PRIMARILY HIGH SPEED DIESEL OIL. MOREOVER, WAPDA OFFICIAL (AFTAB SYED KHAN, MEMBER FOR POWER GENERATION) IN COURSE OF HALF-HOUR CONVERSATION CONTRALIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DICTED HIMSELF BY ADMITTING TO ALL OF GENERATION EQUIPMENT OUTAGES REPORTED BY PRAZAK. KHAN SAID, HOWEVER, WAPDA BELIEVED IT COULD MEET ALL ELECTRICITY DEMANDS EXCEPT FOR PEAK PERIOD FROM 1700-2100 EVENINGS, AND PLANNED TO COMPENSATE FOR THAT BY LOAD-SHEDDING OF WAPDA TUBEWELL LINES IN COUNTRYSIDE. HE ASSERTED THAT WAPDA TUBEWELLS IN VARIOUS SCARPS CONSUME 250 MW, WHICH IF DIVERTED WOULD BE ENOUGH TO COVER PEAK PERIODS FO INDUSTRY AND CITIES. HE NOTED THAT TUBEWELLS DO NOT

RUN 24 HOURS A DAY IN ANY CASE, AND BELIEVED LOAD-SHEDDING
WOULD CAUSE NO PARTICULAR HARDSHIP TO FARMERS.

6. ON OTHER HAND, SENIOR PUNJAB IRRIGATION DEPT OFFICIAL SAADAT
ALI WENT ONE STEP FURTHER THAN PRAZAK AND OUTLINED DISMAL
IRRIGATION PROSPECTS FOR WINTER. HE SHOWED DPO STATISTICS
WHICH INDICATED THAT CURRENT FLOW OF WATER IN INDUS,
JHELMUM AND CHENAB RIVERS IS ALMOST 50 PERCENT BELOW NORMAL FOR
THIS TIME OF YEAR (BASED ON 33-YEAR AVERAGE). PROJECTING
HIS DEPARTMENT'S STATISTICS, ALI FORECAST WATER FLOWS
THROUGH REMAINDER OF WINTER AT LEVELS 50-60 PERCENT BELOW NORMAL.
HE SAID SOME OFFICIALS ADVOCATED CONSERVING WATER AT MANGLA
TO BE USED IN PLANTING KHARIF CROP IN LATE OCT AND NOVE.
HOWEVER, HE HAD ADVISED RELEASING AS MUCH WATER AS POSSIBLE NOW,
SO THAT RICE AND COTTON CROPS WHICH ARE PRESENTLY MATURING
WILL NOT DRY UP BEFORE BEING HARVESTED. HE OPINED THAT IT WOULD
BE BETTER TO SAVE WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN PLANTED THAN TO GIVE FALSE
ENCOURAGEMENT TO FARMERS TO OVER-PLANT WHEAT, WHICH MIGHT
THEN SUFFER HEAVY LOSSES BECAUSE OF LACK OF SUFFICIENT
IRRIGATION WATER.

7. COMMENT: IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT NORTHERN PAKISTAN SHOULD
BE CAUGHT IN WATER AND POWER BIND SIMILAR TO SITUATION PRE-
VAILING IN NEIGHBORING PARTS OF INDIA THIS SEASON. WHAT
IS SIGNIFICANT, IF TRUE, IS THAT GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN
SO LITTLE ACTION THUS FAR TO PREPARE PUBLIC TO COPE WITH
IMPENDING CRISIS. LIKE SOME OTHERS IN LAHORE, WE BELIEVE
AGRICULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM MAY BE FAR MORE CRITICAL
THAN INDUSTRIAL ONES. LACK OF APPRECIABLE CONCERN AND ACTION
ON PART OF LOCAL OFFICIALS IS UNSETTLING. WE HOPE THEY ARE
NOT COUNTING ON FOREIGN FRIENDS TO BAIL THEM OUT ONCE AGAIN,
AS SOME HAVE ALREADY HINTED. WE ARE CONTINUING TO SEEK
FURTHER DETAILS ON ACTUAL SITUATION AND WILL REPORT WHAT
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WE LEARN.
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